

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 are all the claims pending in the application. Claims 1-11 presently stand rejected.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-9

Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thomas et al. (US 5,607,259) in view of Howard et al. (US 2,148,427).

Applicant has amended independent claim 1 to recite --the internal weld bead (23) having a degree of interpenetration with the first external elemental weld bead (25)--. This amendment is supported in the specification at least at the paragraph bridging pages 10 and 11.¹ This feature, which is not disclosed by the prior art, improves the quality of the welding.

Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 is patentable at least because there is no reasonable combination of Thomas and Howard that would meet all of the claim's recitations.

The feature of the internal weld bead having a degree of interpenetration with the first external elemental weld bead is not disclosed in either Thomas or Howard.

The Examiner asserts that Howard's welding arrangement meets the configuration of claim 1. However, claim 1 now recites the interpenetration of the internal and external weld beads, which is not disclosed in Howard. Moreover, Howard, which issued in 1939, merely briefly discloses some methods of attaching supporting members to the internal or lined wall of a

¹ Corresponds to ¶ [0039] of the US Patent Application Publication 2007-0107184.

vessel. There is no direction in Howard that can be considered an internal nor external welding.

Instead, in FIG. 3 of Howard, two identical weldings are provided on each sides of a same bracket. The welding process is not described.

Thomas, which issued in 1994, discloses a complex welding process for assembling long sections of booms of support legs of an oil platform, and does not disclose the *interpenetration of the internal and external weld beads*, as in claim 1. Moreover, as safety is very important for oil platform, one of ordinary skill in the art would certainly not have looked to a very succinct document published in 1939 for the purpose of simplifying a complex welding procedure from 1994.

Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claim 1 is patentable. In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that dependent claims 2-9 are patentable at least due to their dependency from claim 1.

Claims 10 and 11

Claims 10 and 11 are rejected under 37 C.F.R. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Howard et al. (US 2,198,534) in view of Conrad (US 2,093,881).

With respect to device claim 10, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection at least because there is no reasonable combination of Thomas and Howard that would meet all of the claim's recitations. For example, there is no reasonable combination of these references that would meet the claimed device including a welding head (27) which is constituted by a nozzle (28) *and a chamfer guide (29)*.

That is, contrary to the Examiner's position, Conrad does not disclose a chamfer guide. A "chamfer guide" is a structure of the welding head that is supported on the *chamfer*, which is

desirable to produce a weld bead.² In contrast, the guide 7 of Conrad is merely a guide for the filler rod used to deliver the filler rod 6 to the arc.³

Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 10 is patentable.

With respect to device claim 11, Applicant respectfully requests the Examiner to withdraw the rejection at least because there is no reasonable combination of Thomas and Howard that would meet all of the claim's recitations. For example, there is no reasonable combination of these references that would meet the claimed device including carriage (22) which carries at least one welding head (37, 38) and guiding means (36). Conrad's guide 7 cannot be considered equivalent to the guide means (e.g., rollers⁴) of the device of claim 1.

Thus, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 11 is patentable.

Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

² See specification at full paragraph on page 12. US 2007-0107184 at ¶ [0046].

³ See Conrad at 1:34-36.

⁴ See specification at full paragraph on page 13.

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
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The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

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